

INPUT FOR PERSONAL OR COMMUNAL REFLECTION

8. Father Francis of the Cross

by Fr. Michael Overmann SDS, Munich, 1 December 2020

Then, speaking to all, Jesus said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it.'

(Lk 9, 23-24)



Painting on the outside wall of the Basilika St. Francis in Assisi

Fr. Jordan: "My chief wish ... is that all of you seek to immerse yourselves more deeply in the mystery of the love of the cross...; that you love suffering.... This will convince you that the fruits of salvation flourish only in the shadow of the cross. ... Through suffering, through patient suffering, you will call down blessings from above. Therefore:... become lovers of the cross! ... I wish that everyone would follow the dear Saviour in suffering just like St. Francis did! You know the dear Saviour redeemed the world through his passion! Do we want to choose a different way?"

(quotes from the Chapter Talks, 4.10.1898)

On 11 March 1883, John-Baptist Jordan took his vows and chose the religious name 'Francis Mary of the Cross'. The question arises: "Why this name in particular?" Since when and how had the spiritual closeness to St. Francis of Assisi developed, which then led to this religious name? In 1877, he referred to this saint for the first time in his Spiritual Diary; in 1885 he dreamt that St. Francis blessed him and his foundation. (SD I/15+184) When I discovered the picture of the two cross-bearers in Assisi, I soon realised: Fr Francis of the Cross could be the third in this row.

The passage about the 'sending out of the disciples' (Mt 10, 5-10)

had brought clarity to the searching Francis. From then on, he himself wanted - like the apostles - to live and proclaim Christ's relinquishment on the cross. Jesus, stripped of his clothes and crucified - Francis, stripped of his clothes, took the cross upon himself. The 'dropout' chose the apostolic path - consistently and radically. For him, however, the cross was not a rejection of life, but an orientation towards life, life in fullness.

Fr. Jordan, equally searching, found himself in it; he admonished himself and us: to live and proclaim Christ, the Crucified - like the Apostles and like St. Francis.

Suggestions for further reflection:

1. What crosses and sufferings do I have to bear in my life?
2. What is the significance of Christ's death on the cross for my life in apostolic mission?
3. "Proclaiming Christ as crucified" (SD II/113 + III/22) means for me ...?

Meditation (SD I/179)

"John Mary Francis of the Cross
therefore:

the cross is your life
the cross is your salvation
the cross is your crown
the cross is your glory
the cross is your hope
the cross is your shield
the cross is your protection
the cross is your portion
the cross is your joy....

For I should glory in nothing
but the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6,14)."